



Testimony of  
**Sal Luciano, President  
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Planning & Development Committee  
March 20, 2019

***SB 882 An Act Concerning Municipal Arbitration and the Municipal Employees'  
Retirement System***

***SB 1072 An Act Concerning the Connecticut Advisory Commission on  
Intergovernmental Relations***

***SB 1081 An Act Concerning Municipal Set-Aside Requirements***

***HB 7192 An Act Concerning Municipal and Regional Opportunities and  
Efficiencies***

Good afternoon Senator Cassano, Representative McCarthy-Vahey and members of the Planning & Development Committee. My name is Sal Luciano and I am proud to serve as the President of the Connecticut AFL-CIO, a federation of hundreds of local unions representing more than 220,000 members in the private sector, public sector, and building trades. Our members live and work in every city and town in our state and reflect the diversity that makes Connecticut great. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on legislation impacting Connecticut's working families.

***SB 882 An Act Concerning Municipal Arbitration and the Municipal Employees'  
Retirement System: OPPOSE***

Connecticut Municipal Employees Retirement System (CMERS) has been a successful partnership between municipalities and their enrolled employees. It is an affordable mechanism to provide meaningful deferred compensation so that public servants who provide high quality taxpayer services can retire in dignity.

We are disheartened with the Governor's proposal to more than double employee CMERS contributions in less than three years. While CMERS has lowered its rate of return from eight percent to seven percent, making that difference up exclusively on the backs of municipal employees is unfair and unreasonable.

We remind the Committee that most municipal employees have faced significant healthcare increases and little if any wage growth over the last several years. Raising contribution rates so drastically would be punitive, especially since so many like janitors, paraprofessionals and clerical staff are relatively low-wage workers.

If the Committee is intent on raising employee contributions, we ask you instead to establish a Municipal Employees' Bargaining Agent Coalition (MEBAC) to negotiate common mandatory subjects of bargaining (pension and healthcare) on a statewide level. This could be based on

the state's SEBAC model and would save dozens of municipalities weeks, if not months, at the bargaining table and would potentially significantly reduce arbitration costs. A MEBAC could also use economies of scale to achieve savings in a number of areas.

We also ask the Committee to reject proposals to amend the binding arbitration statute. A 2006 Program Review and Investigations study, the last comprehensive review of binding arbitration in the state, demonstrated that the system works. Not only is the process effective, but it most often benefits management. The study found arbitrators rule in the employer's favor at least fifty-five percent of the time. There is no reason to tinker with a system in which so many public employees have trust to provide final resolution on matters in dispute.

***SB 1072 An Act Concerning the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS***

While we appreciate the intent to rebalance the membership of the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations, this proposal falls far short. Management representatives will have influence over seven nominations and be granted another two. The proposal provides for a single Labor representative. That does not make for a balanced committee or for balanced results, especially on regionalization efforts that will so directly impact municipal employees. We urge the Committee to amend this bill to provide an equal number of representatives from Management and Labor.

***SB 1081 An Act Concerning Municipal Set-Aside Requirements: OPPOSE***

This bill excludes municipal public works contracts financed by five hundred thousand dollars or less of state funding from set-aside and affirmative action plan requirements. We strongly believe that publicly-funded work should be performed by residents that reflect the diversity of our state. We urge the Committee to reject this bill.

***HB 7192 An Act Concerning Municipal and Regional Opportunities and Efficiencies: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS***

We applaud Governor Lamont for recognizing the need to find efficiencies and regionalize services within the fragmented system of municipal government in our state. However, as we said with regard to SB 1072, we cannot have confidence in a regionalization plan that is developed without significant contributions and input from those who deliver municipal public services. The memberships of the Connecticut Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations and the Commission on Shared School Services are both lopsided with Management representatives. Apart from teachers, other Board of Education employees, such as paraeducators, janitors, cafeteria staff, school nurses and administrators, have no representation on the Commission on Shared School Services. They should each be represented as well. We urge the Committee to amend this bill to ensure both Commissions have equal representation from Management and Labor.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony.